

# Last Days



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"I want to write about good sex

something more tangible than re

# read this first!

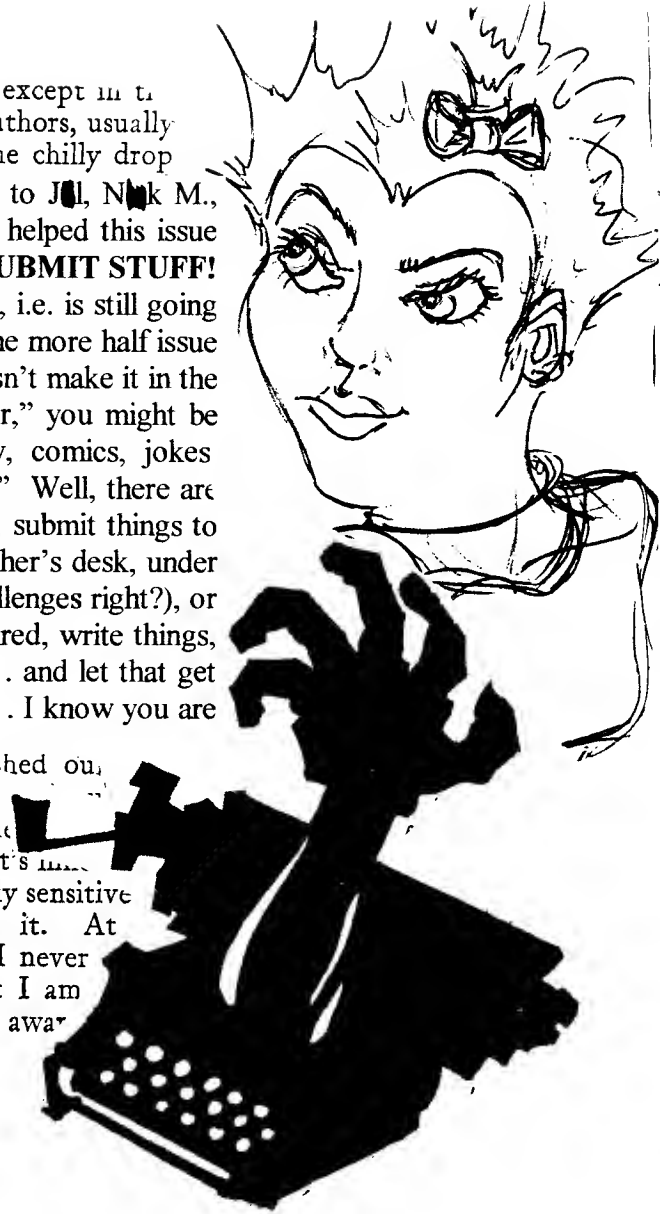
Hey Hey Hey >>>to all of you I.E. readers out there. Special thanks to Jui, Nick M., Qian, Lina S., Xie, Lina H., Ben, Emily, and everyone else who helped this issue get out. To loyal i.e. fans, like this issue and I hope it inspires you to **SUBMIT STUFF!** To new readers I extend the same demand. As the year is wrapping up, i.e. is still going strong. With the contributions of i.e. patrons, there will be hopefully one more half issue and a pamphlet. So, the more submissions the better, and even if it doesn't make it in the next issue, there is always next year (we recycle). "But dearest editor," you might be asking yourself, "how can I, a mere subscriber, submit my (poetry, comics, jokes, articles, artwork, lost&found, satires, social commentaries, etc.) to i.e.?" Well, there are several ways . . . submit things to your local i.e. distributor (in person), submit things to the I.E. box located in the back right corner of room 405B (next to teacher's desk, under the saddle desks . . . yes I know it is hard to find . . . but you all like challenges right?), or you can speak directly to me, Alkat, the editor... At any rate, feel inspired, write things, and give them to us! It's spring time, go find a partner and fornicate . . . and let that get the creative juices flowing. Every reader can be a part of the i.e. staff . . . I know you are lazy, so write!

gender written out, printed and published on covers, even sent copies to the most famous psychologists of all countries, nothing came of it for a long time—as long, unluckily, as Kit's enforced idleness rendered her particularly sensitive to discouragement—nothing did come of it. At the end of the events, nothing in the least desirable. I never had any questions on this subject; but I am sure if she did not become, gradually aware

55



"You see in all my stories I am trying to perpetuate a mythical state of order and repair, for the natural state of all things is chaos and the struggle in life is to preserve our vague conceptions that we possess power in the universe." Taxes, lottery, credit debt and loss. We learn to live within the confines we place on ourselves and never question them. We learn to choke back our doubts at the end of the day and drown them with a little gin and tonic. Money is an absurd burden, a horrible way to structure society – for the more you have the more you want and the less you have the more you resent those who have more. Resentment, hatred, greed, and jealousy. Try not to be afraid – the future is uncertain until the past defines it and the present manifests it.



# Ben: In a Snit!

Hundreds gathered on Friday the 22<sup>nd</sup> to witness the snit of 10<sup>th</sup> grader Ben Birkey. It was the beginning of 5<sup>th</sup> period journalism when, due to an unknown provocation, he launched into the biggest snit of Henry Foss history.

Mr. Birkey immediately lapsed into the well-known symptoms of the Snittage syndrome. He sat in a cushioned chair with arms crossed, grumbling at random intervals that, no, he was not in a snit. Whispers wafted through the crowd that this was Stage One, known as denial.

Then Mr. Birkey became angry; spewing insults and making crude noises at the newspaper's esteemed editor. (For her protection she will remain nameless. Rumor has it, however, that she goes by the name of Laura "Canadian-and-don't-you-forget-it" Hadden.)

Students stood by in gaping horror as Mr. Birkey continued his escapade of anger. Just when the content was approaching NC-17 material, the snitting student collapsed into depression, the third of four snit stages. Encouraging words from the loving journalism community did nothing for Mr. Birkey, who lay curled up in the fetal position under the table, refusing to come out.

The action slowing, the crowd of students dispersed, leaving only the journalism students and the troubled Mr. Birkey. It was the end of 6<sup>th</sup> period before he accepted his snit problem, and was able to move on with his life.

His friends and family would like Mr. Birkey to know that he had their support the whole way, and if such an episode were to happen again, they would promptly disown him and stuff psychiatrist recommendations down his trousers until he got the message.

## Emily Mirra Slanders Ben Birkey!

Noted "trash-talker" and local 10<sup>th</sup> grader Emily Mirra has started a grassroots campaign to slander her classmate, Ben Birkey. Problems first began when she realized that Laura Hadden was being especially cruel to the boy, and immediately joined in on the Ben-bashing. Contrary to popular belief, Mr. Birkey did *not* enter the stages of snittage, or even hint at such things. Rather, he remained calm as Emily made a fool of herself in her attempts to belittle him.

In the usual procession of slander, Emily first began her barrage of words with simple "yo momma" jokes, then proceeded to a much more complex level of ridicule, such as "yo sista" or "yo doggy".

Ben remained calm and levelheaded, however, and tried to communicate with the enraged Emily. The dangerous situation soon escalated, however, when Laura Hadden, editor of the Foss Focus, began a true display of typical Canadian jealousy and hatred towards Ben, largely due to the fact that he is much more intelligent and is thought to have better hair.

When the dust settled, very few sided with Emily in her accusations of Ben entering a full-out snit. Among the few that did, however, were Gemma Drouhard, Laura Hadden, and Kristal McCain. Of course, they were all proven to be invariably wrong in the matter.

# avuncular erotics

## The Pleasures of the Closet

"Hey, at least you won't get pregnant."  
(Subplot: McDonald's)

So there I was, standing around after work, smoking cigarettes with the guys. I don't really know why I hang around there, especially after I'm free to go. The backside of McDonalds isn't exactly a happening place. Not only that, but cigarettes kill you, they aren't cool anymore, and they make you taste bad (or so I hear). Secondly, those guys are not my normal friends. They are geeks, faces full of pimples, one doing the gothic thing, another the punk thing. If it wasn't for the fact that we all worked the same shift, day after endless day, I wouldn't even dream of hanging out with them. But then again, I can't really distinguish any of those details about them, because in the dwindling twilight of midwinter, we are all just shadowed images, clad in our god-awful Mickey D's uniforms, smelling like grease and sweat and the overpowering stench of poverty.

I blow the smoke out into the air, not really inhaling. I have to go home, after all, and my mom doesn't like to know that I smoke. She'd really just like to think I don't exist at all, and the smell of cigarette smoke is simply another wafting reminder of my existence. But that's another story, for another time. That night, it was just the guys and myself, wasting away, not wanting to go home. Scuffing our feet, hugging ourselves against the cold and talking shit.

Speaking of talking shit, my mind was slowly drawn back into the conversation, and I began listening to two of the guys talking about a movie that they were going to go see. The conversation went something like this:

"Yeah, my friend told me that two of the chicks kiss."

"Dude, that's totally hot. Lesbians are so cool."

Yeah, whatever. Anyway, I think he's going to see it again, so maybe I'll go too. I'll tell you if it's any good."

"It's gotta be good, I mean, like, there's two chicks making out. What could be better than that?"

"Dude, just don't bring your girlfriend, alright?"

Their conversation was not unlike many others I hear, all the time. I have never really understood why guys get off on two girls making out, even though I should, I mean, I know why I think that it's hot. So there I was, feeling like because I am a girl (female, chick, woman, gal, etc.), I should say something, and yet I didn't quite know what to say. So I stood there, and went through my options in my head.

I could ask, for the umpteenth time, why the hell two girls together are so hot. But I dismissed this because there wasn't really any coherent way for them to answer. It just IS hot. Nothing more to it. That, and I didn't really care why they thought it was hot. I mainly just wanted to stick up for lesbians, and women in general.

I could tell them that I was in great need of cash, and would they pay me if I made out with my girlfriend in front of them? But I also quickly dismissed that because, A. My girlfriend would never agree, B. I knew they didn't have enough cash to make it worth my while, and C. It never pays to tell guys you're a lesbian because they just think it's hot. I know this from too many parties, too much cheap beer.

I could ask them to make out with each other because I think that's hot, just to teach them a lesson. But that option wouldn't work either, because frankly I don't really

think that two guys is hot (duh, I'm a lesbian), they would never agree, and I would be excluded from further conversations and smoke breaks with them.

Fortunately, at this point they realized that I existed and decided that it wouldn't get them any dates (the ones without girlfriends) if they talked about lesbians around a girl, so I didn't end up having to make any choices about what to say. It was too bad for them that they wouldn't get dates anyway, certainly not with me.

So instead, we parted ways, flicking the last bits of ash and cigarette butts onto the ground and getting into our ghetto-ass cars. As a parting comment, I yelled across the parking lot to them;

"Dude, for all it's worth, I think it's hot too."

All heads turned, but by that point, I was in my car and outta there. I'd get to find out at work the next day what they thought of that, but right then I didn't give a shit. I had home to think about, and finding another way out of this stupid town. Maybe some day I'll leave McDonalds, leave this town, leave my white-trash girlfriend, and make a million bucks. Or maybe I'll just stick around, live with my mom, smoke some more with the guys, and get left by my girlfriend when she goes to college and makes something of herself.

There are lots of great things about being a lesbian in a shitty town like this one. There are also a lot of things that suck. It's better than being a gay guy though. And as my mom says in her oh-so-disparaging way,

"Hey, at least you won't get pregnant."

--Twit and pussycat

Up in this modern beast. I see the world...a mass confusion of green and brown, overtaken by gray. Details of the finest point, carved into a splendid sphere of life. I am waking, I am raining, as the clouds whisper, and shift about. My chair in it's upright position...only this thick plastic window separates me from the sky. Only a bit of persuasion and I would hack through the window with my nails and teeth. Jumping into a destructive death dream. Opening up and out upon the finest day. Sweet recognition of the land. I would float, or play, flying in and out of the mist rings. Little white gardens of my Love. Of my ressurected mind. An open dream to be etched in a memorable day. Where music plays with every turn and slip, combining with butter fluff and sugar spasms, the sun is shining upon me.

You open your eyes and smile at me, a simple welcome grin, caress my face with outstretched hand. Your supple fingers glide over my cheek, rest lightly upon my moistened lips, slide silently up and close my eyes, your breath is hot upon my eyelashes. I refuse to open my eyes as I await your move. It never comes. The dark closes in, stifling, I cry out...open my eyes alone in a cold place, a cold world, without you. I feel the lingering essence of your touch upon my eyes, my lips, my heart, alone the tears run down my face as I depart this place without you.

scandinavian sex

## Hemingway-esque

"The real pleasures in life are the ones you can savor. That includes food, accomplishment, scenery and love. Sex and exhilaration don't count."

"So why do you keep coming back?"

"Anticipation, mostly. Like Christmas presents."

She moved slightly onto her side. The expensive bed absorbed the motion. "I always liked Christmas. Did you make lists?"

"No."

She waited.

"We were told each November 1st how many presents we would get. Gave us time to reconcile our greedy disappointment. If your parents don't know you well enough to know what you want, what's the point of gifts?"

"You're feeling hollow again."

"Sure."

"You are."

His expression didn't change. He still looked up at the ceiling. "So what if I am? You don't know what it's like, and I've described it to you. So what's the point of bringing it up?"

"Why, I wonder, do people get contemplative and look up at the ceiling afterward?"

"People? You don't. You mean everyone else?"

"Just because I don't doesn't mean that most everyone else doesn't. You've said yourself I'm different. That doesn't indicate, signify, er... shit."

The lights came up in the bedroom. The author appeared. "You're slipping."

"Yes, I know. Sorry. But this dialogue is so vapid."

"We're going for a Hemingway feel here. It isn't supposed to be flushed out."

The woman shrugged.

"I'm trying to write about discontent and sex here. I know it's hard material, but I wouldn't be attempting it if I didn't think it would work. You know I have full confidence in you."

"What about me?" the man asked from the bed. "You don't know what I can do yet."

"That's true. I haven't worked with you before. But I wrote you for a reason, so again, I have confidence in you."

"I know. How am I doing?"

"You're doing well, keep it up."

"Am I going to get a name?"

The author scratched his chin. "I'm not sure. This story doesn't necessarily need details like that. You're not so much a character here as a representation."

"I'd like to have a goatee, if that wouldn't be too much of a problem."

The author smiled. "Perhaps. I'll see how things flow."

"How long until we get published?" the woman character asked.

The author excused himself and checked his calendar. The question hung on the page until he returned.

**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.**

"I'm meeting Henry next Friday. It'll depend on how long it takes me to polish this story up. If you remember your lines, obviously, it'll be quicker."

"I know, I know. Even the great characters mess up on occasion, though. Ishmael stuttered at first, and he only had three words."

"That was different. He was the narrator, first impressions are more important there. But I know what you mean."

"I know you're trying to save words and all, and we haven't finished writing yet, but any idea on edits?" the man asked.

"Don't know yet. It'll probably depend on how my meeting with Henry goes. I'm not sure if this is heading for a book or a spot somewhere. It might be short enough for the New Yorker."

The man smiled and the woman rubbed her hands together. "That'd be sweet," she said. "David will never make the New Yorker."

"What is it with you two?" the author asked, looking down at his character lying on the bed. "You're jealous that I didn't center a novella around you?"

The woman didn't answer at first. "Well, it's every character's dream. Don't be so stupid and pretend you don't know that."

"Hey, don't call me stupid, or I'll give you gangrene. Hemingway liked gangrene."

"Sorry."

"I know how you feel. But plenty of characters have made their lives in short stories. It's not like the short story doesn't have potential. And it could be worse. You could have your own detective series."

The woman shuddered. "I hate those readers. I don't want to be read in workout clubs. Ever. It's demeaning. It's like being in a Reader's Digest."

The author laughed, then paused and chewed on his bottom lip. The man and the woman exchanged glances..

"I just thought of something for the story about the man and the woman in the café. I'm afraid we'll have to continue this session later."

"That's quite alright," the woman said. "Say hello to Amelia for me."

"Give my regards too," the man added.

"I will. See you soon," the author said, and closed the notebook.

Nicholas Mirra  
May 14, 2002

# The Cheese Factor

Wake up grainy-eyed and hating life, all you've put me through. Eyes purple rimmed from tears throughout the night, blink in the darkness of a morning that isn't even morning yet. The sun dare not arise so early, for fear of death too young.

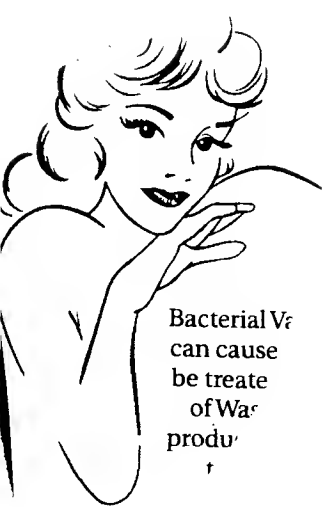
Little sleep last night, too focused on what's been and what's to come...too intent upon the pain that racks my heart, spreads through my every limb, and spills, wet and warm down my cheeks, muffled by a pillow, damp and uncomfortable.

At some point you entered, I felt you there and threw the pillow, not looking, I screamed. You left.

I feel your absence now rip through me, more harsh than the presence I rejected. You must not care. If you cared you would have stayed and fought for your beliefs, fought me until I lost. I wish you has. I wish I had lost.

Losing is less painful when I'm not losing you.





For those in the IB English program, classroom novels have represented four long years of symbolism, meaning, lyricism, and depth. Countless class hours have been spent daydreaming about ways to liven up these dreary novels of character development. So finally, a needed respite: pulp fiction.

Ivan woke up in a cold sweat, his eyes plastered to the gaping hole in the ceiling. He couldn't remember the name of the woman lying next to him. Nor could he remember how he had gotten a peg leg. "Must have been gangrene," he thought.

Outside the window the yam fields were burning. Someone had left the light on in the adjacent bathroom. Ivan forgot he had a bathroom. The spiced tea from the previous day's ceremony hung over the room like an unwashed shag carpet. He made a motion to sit up, and a thunderclap went off inside his skull. His head felt like a sieve.

Flies buzzed around the dead carcass of a large gray monster in the corner. It looked like its arm had been torn off. Ivan hadn't noticed it there before. With a rush the previous week's activities came flooding back. The fight on the riverboat, Master Harold's sudden disappearance, the whole shebang. Ivan wondered what had happened to Odysseus.

Ivan was leaning against the bathroom sink when July's people broke down the door. "Dammit Gertrude," Ivan yelled as he reached for the fire extinguisher. He pulled the plug and blasted the men with white powder. The woman on the bed groaned and rolled over. Ivan noticed she had an extraordinarily long nose and striking blue eyes.

Wobbling outside half an hour later, Ivan checked his room number and headed down the hallway. A young man stumbled past, carrying a hatchet. As he neared the stairs, Ivan recalled part of the name of the woman on the bed. "Edith something," he grouched. "Started with an H."

The neon sign flashed *Birnam Wood Motel*. Above him, a young woman stood on the terrace to her room and held out her arm. An owl swooped down and landed. The two disappeared from view. "Bloody Irish," an old lady in a tattered wedding gown said from the sidewalk. Down the street ran a large ham chased by knife-wielding men in white robes.

A lump in his pants pocket produced the deed to an estate. An accompanying bill of sale was made out in rubles. Ivan couldn't remember what they were doing there, so he crumpled up the papers and threw them into the water, where they exploded. Whirling around at screeching tires, Ivan saw an old pickup truck pulled up to the side of the dock. Four burly men got out. They pulled three objects out of the back and threw them into the water. Ivan thought they looked like dead poets, but it could have been meaningless garbage.

He shook his head to clear the cobwebs. He was sure this episode was going somewhere, but he couldn't figure out where. "Just my luck," he said to no one in particular. "If Osric was here he'd know what to do."

Across the street the Youngers were carrying the huge swordfish skeleton they had chosen into their apartment. "That's it," Ivan shouted to the crows eating from a bag of nuts in the gutter. Ivan turned on his heel, grabbed the shotgun leaning against the fire hydrant, and caught a cab for Mildendo.

Contained within the previous nine paragraphs are references to 33 plays, novels, or bodies of work read over the last four years of English IB. Be the first in your math class to identify all 34.



Cyrano De Bergerac

Uncle Vanya

The Odyssey

Julius Caesar

Romeo & Juliet

Hamlet

Fool's Crow

Nectar in a Sieve

King Lear

Macbeth

Beowulf

The Bluest Eye

Lord of the Flies

The Grapes of Wrath

Crime and Punishment

Thousand Cranes

July's People

Huckleberry Finn

A Doll's House

Gulliver's Travels

Raisin in the Sun

Great Expectations

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich

When Rain Clouds Gather

Edith Hamilton's Mythology

To Kill a Mockingbird

(Ernest Hemingway)

I Heard the Owl Call My Name

(Langston Hughes, Sylvia Plath, and John Keats)

A Modest Proposal

Master Harold and the Boys

The Chosen



The tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup> have forced us all to reevaluate ourselves, the lives we lead, and the ideals we stand for. If any hope can be taken out of the devastation, it is the knowledge that we all hold the instinct to unite under duress. Our troubled times have allowed us to turn blind eyes to previous differences and grudges; we are appreciating what is universally treasured.

As life settles back towards routine, communication becomes direly important. Understanding between peoples is vital if we are going to appreciate one another. Misunderstanding and ignorance of backgrounds and cultures facilitates only suspicion. Therefore and in this spirit, I propose a standardization of insults. We must understand what our neighbors are saying when words fly, and not be led down a path of confusion by regional, colloquial or misunderstood slanders.

Below is the proposed list of insults which can be adopted by all English-speaking people in the spirit of unity.

### American Insults of Brotherhood

Antichrist: useful when attributing to another the evil intent to destroy our wholesome, American way of life

asshole: used by the Founding Fathers, the All-American insult

bastard: no other insult comes out of the mouth with such force and dignity

butthead: general and direct, this insult registers dissatisfaction without being crude

coward: indicates a person who will not die, vote, or spend money to save America

fat-ass: no one likes their ass being called fat

idiot: an elemental insult; anyone who is unclear about its meaning is likely a Communist

jerk: an elemental insult for anyone who has done something unkind or un-patriotic

motherfucker: America is the greatest exporter of this insult; as American as baseball

philanthropizing pile of poop: commonly used on the playground, this insult is for catching the foe off-guard

stupid head: our President's insult of choice; all Americans recognize this insult's sleek beauty and sophistication

twit: it is important that we respect our English partners in the fight against terrorism.

Thus has this insult been adopted by a grateful public

### Degenerate Words of Evil

blockhead

bugger

dipshit

dolt

fat head

infidel

meanie

moron

nincompoop

sack o' shit

slapdick

tit

thunder thighs

twerp

yellow-belly

With this common understanding of the words that protect our precious freedoms and articulate what Americans have to say, we can move forward into a bright future. A future free from terrorism, degenerate activity, subversion, and motherfucking cowards.

# folk

ETS • FUN LIGHTS •



WAM •



## Bush Whacked

**Fake Candidate**  
Green Party

## Hey, kids! it's the IE Horoscopes!

### Aries

Dear Aries,  
I'm sorry that I have to say this to you in writing, that I don't have the courage to tell you in person...I've found someone else, Aries. You know as well as I do that this wasn't a happy relationship. It was bound to happen sometime. I'll be over at six to pick up my things.  
Love,  
Clever Pseudonym

### Sagittarius

The echidna is a very strange creature...A freakish, spiny, egg-laying creature. With a four-pronged penis. Meditate, Sagittarius, on how this relates to your life. What do the prongs of the metaphysical penis mean to you this month?

### Leo

And for you, Leo, a Haiku:  
Sunburn oversight  
Looks like a jelly doughnut  
Could be contagious

### Virgo

Great news, Virgo! You will make millions of dollars this year. I recommend dropping out of school and sitting on the couch in your underwear until the dough starts rolling in. It'll come, I swear.

### Taurus

Enough said.

### Libra

Ha ha! Wow, that's a great fate...I mean, how embarrassing for you, but *man!* Ha ha ha...that sucks. A lot. But it's just so funny! And embarrassing! Whoo! Wait until your friends witness *that!*

### Capricorn

The more I think about it, Capricorn, the more convinced I am that masturbation is a deeply philosophical activity that greatly enhances ones understanding of life. Hedonism is a valuable pursuit. Lock yourself in the bathroom this weekend and meditate on that.

### Aquarius

So, Aquarius, when we last left off, we decided that you were getting pretty royally screwed in the grand scheme of things. I also offered consoling words, which apparently meant nothing to you. All of this got me to thinking, and to keep a long and enthralling story full of mystery and intrigue short, I've decided that you deserve it, you fuck. I am no longer going to tell you anything that will happen to you except this one thing: It sucks. A lot. And really, what you're planning to do on Wednesday the 5th is just *sick*.

### Pisces

Meow. Meow? Meooooowww... Rwow? Rwow! Purr. Purrrrrrrr. Meow! Rwowr!

### Cancer

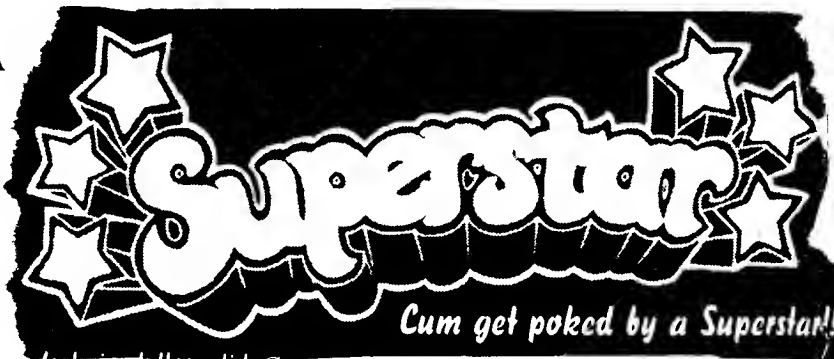
Cancer, you have worked long and hard, and I dunno, maybe you'll amount to great things. You have neglected one duty, though, and have neglected it thouroughly. This is unacceptable. Until you dance naked on the hood of the campus security police car, you cannot move forward.

### Gemini

I like you Gemini, and so I'm going to reveal to you a little secret...it may be a little hard to bear at first, but in time, you'll learn to deal with it...at any rate, it's about time I told you, George W. Bush is your mother. Aww, it's not that...no, wait, you're right. It is that bad. You get to play with nuclear missiles, though! That's something!

### Scorpio

Scorpio, scorpio, scorpio...you have done nothing with your life, and the pattern will continue into the next month. All you do is sit! And when you're not sitting, you are doing boring things. Everyone agrees. I don't even know why you still have friends.



Here's another moment in which I had much the same realization. After being a vegetarian for a long time, I was taken to a family dinner for Easter. This being not close family, I had to eat what I was given. The piece of meat that I was given somehow fell in the shape of a horse's head, and there was even a little eye and a mouth. I wish I could show it to you, but I ended up eating all the meat around it and throwing that bit away. The whole goddamn reason I became a vegetarian was so that my food wouldn't smile at me, and here it was, a self-fulfilling prophesy.

# Sweet Savage Splendor Text Response Journal\*

with MAMA CRASS



\* The sharp crack of a whip was heard, and then seemed to hang in the hot, humid air as if suspended in time." (pg. 7)

\* "His unexpected entrance startled her, and Felicia lost hold on her blanket... his breath fanned her face as he said, "I brought you firewood, in case you got cold during the night, but you're not going to need it."" (pg. 105)

\* "...shoved her hand between his legs, asking, "Is *this* what frightened you? Did you discover I was too much of a man for you?"" (pg. 149)

\* "I'm warnin' ye, we won't tolerate ye looking down on him because he's half-Indian, or insulting him." (pg. 241)

\* "... her cheeks flushed with anger, and her proud, lush breasts heaving in agitation." (pg. 284)

\* "'I'm about to burst my breeches for want of you. Have pity on me. Free me.'" (pg. 287)

\* "...and your woman's lips look like dewy, pink rosebuds.'" (pg. 288)

\* "She thought every inch of him beautiful, even the powerful muscle between his legs, standing long and proud, the ultimate testimony to his masculinity." (pg. 288)

\* "She found her special man, the man of her dreams. Her magnificent savage was the rock she stood on, the air beneath her wings, her sun, her moon, her stars, her everything; and they were going to have a long, wonderful life together. Her happiness was sublime." (pg. 447)

\* The introductory paragraph seems to set the tone for the story, utilizing the climate in order to allow the reader to anticipate the intensely passionate love between Hawk, the rebellious Indian/Scottish 'savage warrior', and Felicia, his 'purebred plantation belle' hostage. The author also appeals to the reader's senses by describing the sound of the whip as it cracks on Hawk's back while introducing the theme of dominance to the novel.

\* Hawk seems to have the ability to disarm Felicia, and while he seems to always catch her off guard, he himself, like a good frontiersman, is always prepared.

\* While Hawk seems quite comfortable with himself, Felicia seems to find him quite overwhelming, just as Hawk had asserted.

\* Sarah, Hawk's Scottish friend, introduces a new theme to the novel -- acceptance of diversity. A struggle that both Hawk and Felicia must face equally.

\* This excerpt allows the reader to juxtaposition the traditional role of breasts as nurturing entities to that of vessels of anger, a contrast that can be noted in Felicia's character as well.

\* Hawk's statement to Felicia expresses his need to be liberated from the confines of his attire, as well as his need to shed his image and perhaps all of the additional baggage he may carry, in order to achieve ultimate satisfaction.

\* The comparison that Hawk makes between Felicia and a rose seems to hold significance in that it emphasizes Felicia's fragility as well as both her newfound physical and emotional vulnerability to Hawk.

\* Like his sensitive and gentle side, Hawk's ultimate testimony of masculinity remains hidden from view until Felicia can reveal and nurture it.

\* The ending allows to see quite a change in character for Felicia, being able to FINALLY accept Hawk for who he truly is -- her magnificent savage.

\*Note: In keeping with the fine, long-standing Text Response Journal tradition, the author would like it to be known that this assignment was completed at 2AM the night before it was due after having not read the book.

## Pilgrimage

My father was recently swept up in the tide of enthusiasm for a distinctly American pilgrimage: a trip to Krispy Kreme. I'm not entirely certain how this surge of pilgrimages came to be. Perhaps it was the result of jealousy—after all, every year millions of Muslims visit the Mecca, but where can the average American go to claim to have “one up” on other pilgrims, in typical American fashion? Or, perhaps, it was the inevitable result of capitalism-as-religion—this is merely a new way for capitalists to deepen their faith. Regardless of how it started, these American pilgrimages are now trendy, and taking part is an interesting (and culturally revealing) experience, indeed.

My father chose Sunday as the day for our pilgrimage. The religious connection escaped neither me, nor my stepmother, who—perhaps desiring to channel the family's fervor into more traditional religious activities—insisted that we go to church first. How fascinating to observe my father during church! It was quite clear that the hour service was interminable to him, as he fidgeted and squirmed in the pew. From a merely culinary point of view, his edginess was understandable. Dry bread and grape juice just can't hold a candle to warm, flaky, glazed doughnuts. What amazed me most was that he bypassed the after-service refreshments entirely. Typically, he is among the first to jump up from the pew before the pastor's last words have finished echoing through the sanctuary. He then darts through the doors, past the entrance hall, and into the room where the refreshments are served in order to have first pick of the cookies, muffins, and juice. But not on this day. Instead, he tried to maneuver my stepmother through the crowd without pausing long enough for her to begin a conversation with anyone. This was, of course, impossible, but it was certainly amusing to watch him try. At long last, he was able to round up the entire family and get us all out to the minivan. Only his wife wasn't adding to the aura of enthusiasm that enveloped the car—she was visibly irked that her suburban socialite see-and-be-seen time was cut short.

And so we set off on our pilgrimage—joining the hundreds of others that had come before us in SUVs, minivans, and other American automobiles plastered with flags and “God Bless America” signs. Because it was a truly American pilgrimage, we took the freeway, using directions printed off the Internet. The only obstacle we had to overcome was light traffic. Who says that the path of a pilgrimage must be strenuous? We Americans like our effort minimized and our results maximized.

After 45 minutes or so, we arrived at the small city that would surely fade, unnoticed, into the map were it not for the fact that it housed the shrine of Krispy Kreme. We took a few wrong turns, which sorely tested my stepmother's displeasure with the pilgrimage. It seems to me that her frustration at our delay revealed a secret desire for the sacred doughnuts. At long last, we pulled into the parking lot where the shrine was located. Being a sacred house of American culture, it came as no surprise to me that Krispy Kreme was surrounded by other American icons: a hardware store, a giant burger joint, a Starbucks.

Even at 1:00 on a Sunday, the line of fellow pilgrims stretched outside the shrine itself, and wound around two sides of the building. Not complaining (perhaps *that* was the greatest sign of our devotion) we dutifully got in line. It took about 20 minutes to get to the door of the shrine, during which time my father strolled over to Starbucks and brought back lattes, like a good pilgrim.

As we got close enough to open the door and stand in the foyer of the shrine, the smell alone was intoxicating. It was so strong that, instead of comments along the lines of, “It sure is nice to get inside where it's warm,” the only remarks to be heard had to do with that pleasant aroma. We stared in awe at the pictures of the first Krispy Kreme shrine, and at a giant menu posted to the right of the doors to the main shrine. Before we had time to absorb everything in the foyer, the line had progressed to the point where we were able to enter the main shrine.

Such a sight greeted us there! A wall display of Krispy Kreme merchandise on the right; tables, chairs, and booths to the left; and directly in front of us, a glass wall behind which we could see the doughnuts being made. There was even a small step in front of the glass wall, in order to facilitate the

viewing for those of shorter height. What an exciting process—we watched in exhilaration as doughnut-shaped dough squirted out onto a series of conveyer belts. The doughnuts-to-be puffed up some before the belts dropped them into oil where they bobbed along for a bit before being flipped. The doughnuts were then transferred to a conveyer belt with slits that passed them under a continual waterfall of frosting. The conveyer belt then carried them to where the attendants of Lord Krispy Kreme placed these perfect specimens in boxes that would bring the good taste of Krispy Kreme to the world.

As we neared that spot where we would face the difficult choice of which of the doughnut varieties we would purchase as the culmination of our pilgrimage, a friendly attendant of Lord Krispy Kreme offered us warm doughnuts plucked fresh from the conveyer belt, and paper hats. How could we possibly refuse either? With zeal, we placed the hats upon our heads and began to eat the doughnuts. They were truly scrumptious—a sort of melt-in-your-mouth goodness unattainable from any other doughnut. You may be wondering if I profess this out of my own, honest beliefs, or if I have merely been brainwashed by Lord Krispy Kreme. While I admit that just about everyone who has gone on this pilgrimage considers any blaspheming of the Krispy Kreme doughnut (i.e., claiming it is anything less than perfect) to be sacrilegious, I believe that even a non-Krispy-Kreme-devotee can agree here that there is something about a Krispy Kreme doughnut that makes it far superior to any other doughnut.

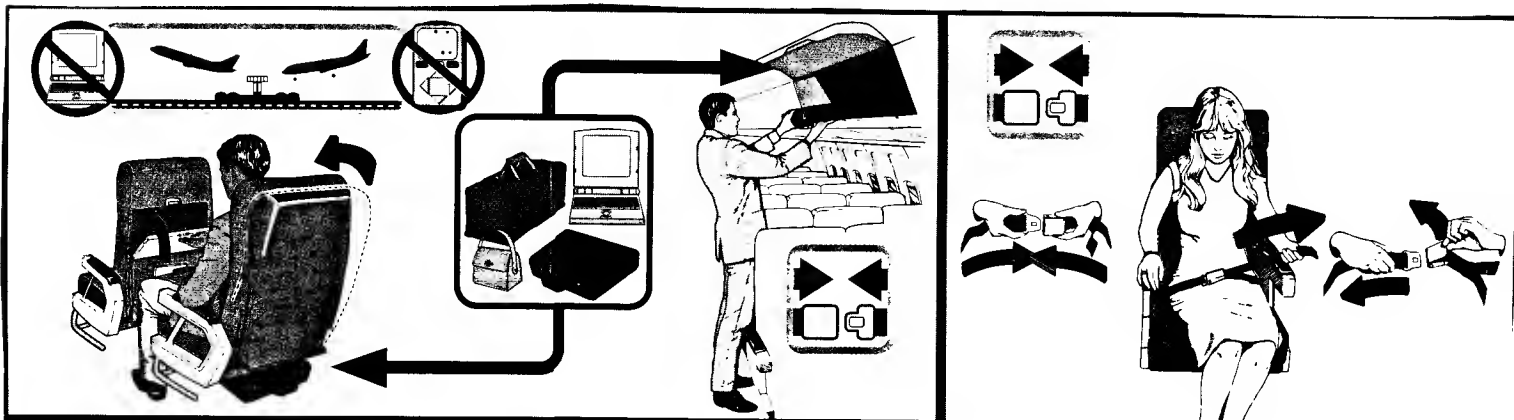
When we reached the point where we were to place our order, we decided upon two doughnuts apiece for immediate consumption, as well as two boxes of a dozen glazed doughnuts: one for home, and one for my father to bring to work in order to proselytize, in hopes of inspiring others to make this same pilgrimage. Still proudly wearing our paper hats that would easily be considered goofy in any other context, we seized a table from a group of pilgrims who had just finished consuming the objects of their devotion. Armed with napkins to catch the drips of jelly and the flakes of powdered sugar (in order to lick it all up afterwards, of course) we savored the sacred doughnuts, while secretly feeling holier than the pilgrims still outside—after all, we got there first and were able to enjoy our doughnuts while they were waiting for a turn at the altar of Krispy Kreme.

On the way home, I was struck by my youngest sibling's devotion. Even though the minivan has tinted windows in the back, making it almost impossible to see anything inside the van, she held her Krispy Kreme hat up to the window for almost the entire ride home. What a way for even the youngest to spread the good taste of Krispy Kreme!

And so concluded my family's pilgrimage to the shrine of Krispy Kreme. We savored our personal dozen over the period of a week or so, warming each doughnut ever so slightly in the microwave in an attempt to recreate the experience of that first doughnut. But it wasn't the same.

I suppose that someday we'll repeat the journey—probably as soon as my parents get tired of their latest diet.

~Nary A Quince



*"Did you ever know that you're my hero...  
you are the wind beneath my wings..."*

Who is your hero, and why? I asked myself this question as I was driving along to a scholarship interview. This question is the bane of my existence. I hate it with a passion. I never have a good answer. Okay, let us go from the top then, break it down.

"Who is your hero?" I asked myself, letting the question hang in the air. Vanessa? No, that's too much of a stock answer. Not my mother, or my father, although I wished I could say that. My sister? No. So why not any of these people? Well, quite frankly, none of them are very perfect. I get mad at all of them, and they all look stupid sometimes. Not really heroic.

"The brave men and women firefighters who came to America's aid on September 11<sup>th</sup>." I rolled my eyes at myself. They'd never believe that, because I didn't believe that. It was too passé, too much of a stock answer. And it was way too patriotic. I almost felt bad saying that, because everyone thinks that they are heroes. I wanted to think that too, I just couldn't.

If the firefighters aren't heroes, I thought, who is? What makes a hero? Well, they save people, I guess. They make us look up to them. They are good people. They are brave, and strong and well... heroic. But I don't know anyone like that!

"Who is your hero?" I asked myself again, more insistent this time. "Uh... some basketball player?" "Who is your hero? Answer me, bitch!" I actually thought it was kind of funny at this point, but true too. I didn't have much more time to figure it out. I was insistent. "Who is your fucking hero?"

The kid I was working with the day before had commiserated with me. I asked him what he would say and I guess he never answered me, because I can't remember what he said. But he did say that I should record that song, the one about you are my hero. I laughed. I don't have a copy of that song, but wouldn't that be great? I could point at them and sing, "did you ever know that you're my hero..." and they would stare

at me and not give me the money. Yeah, upon second thought, maybe that wasn't such a good idea. I mean, besides the fact that I was already on my way there...

"... And why?" Well jeeze, I didn't even know who my hero was, let alone why. But that kind of tied in with what makes a hero. I guess it's not such a simple question. Not that I ever thought it was. Who is your hero? Is it a basketball player, or some other sports star? Is it someone who triumphed after lots of hardship and suffering? The media always tells us that we should look out for the youth of today because there are so few people who are good role models. But can role models be heroes? Aren't heroes supposed to be infallible, while role models are just supposed to set a good example, maybe not be perfect?

Well, I thought, there are many people who could be my hero, and I'm going to tell them that. I'm going to say that there isn't any one person perfect enough to be my hero, and that I can't pick one. But there are tons of people who I look up to, who are imperfect, and yet they are still great people who I admire.

And then it hit me. "My hero is Stephanie Hartford." Tears came to my eyes. She's human too, so how can she be my hero? She probably messes up and makes bad choices. But I've never seen her do so. She won the award for "Top First Year Student" and they made this speech that made her sound like a goddess.

Someday, I suppose, I will come to find that she also makes mistakes. Someday I will realize that this is the same award that I won, standing on the stage right next to her. But right now, in this car, I can't think of anyone else who I think is so perfect. She's kind, friendly, one of the top two freshman students, and she's winning a battle of her own against a debilitating illness. Perfect.

In the end it didn't matter. They didn't even ask me that question. But at least now I know who my hero is. But here's the real question: do *you* know who *your* hero is?

-- Twit and Pussycat

# Ms. Colclough Rewrites Chemistry

In a display of her powerful chemistry know-how, Ms. Colclough proved to her high school class of Chemistry 2 students that, despite all that has been taught to them over the past two semesters, the only true elements are earth, air, fire, and water.

"This has been my contention for a very long time," The middle aged teacher said. She commented, "Those administration bastards wouldn't let me teach it until it was proven. however."

Ted Dikeman, an Earth-Science and biology teacher at the high school had this to say. "When she first told me her theories, I thought she was off her rocker. I still do, sort of. Either way, I guess this proves that she was right about the elements."

"You know, this whole thing gives me hope in my endeavor to prove that dinosaurs were just robots," he added.

The science demonstration took place in front of the eager eyes of thirty students, most of which were very supportive of the experiment.

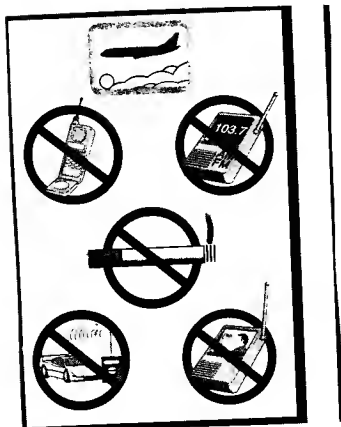
10<sup>th</sup> grader Emily Mirra was on hand to witness the event. "It was incredible," the adoring student said. "I wasn't sure it would work at first, but some of the stuff was just incontrovertible. Like, she showed us how something really complex, like mud, is made up of *only* these elements -- in that case, they were earth and water. Incredible!"

Still, a handful of skeptics remain. Among them is Ben Birkey, another 10<sup>th</sup> grader and witness to the experiment. "I can't believe this," he griped in dismay. "This whole thing is just so stupid!"

Despite the opposition, Diane Colclough remains optimistic. "I think the experiment went exactly as planned. Maybe better. For the most part, I think that Mr. Birkey is just jealous that he didn't think of the idea first. He's just getting a name in the scientific community, and something like this would've been huge for him."

The results of the findings will be published in most scientific reviews, due out next month. A recall of chemistry textbooks is already underway.

I leaned my head back, trying to look out the back window of the car to block out my family, a gesture similar to rolling my eyes, except that it is unique because it is not for anyone's benefit but my own. As I have said, I have notoriously bad vision, which I believe to be both a blessing and a curse. When I leaned my head back that night, I was able to look over the rims of my glasses and straight out the back window. What greeted my eyes was a large spot of bird shit. What was so amazing about this bird shit was that it grinned at me. I shit you not (no pun intended). It had this great big fucking grin, and I swear, that was the moment that I knew there was a god, and god had a great sense of humor.





## PROFESSIONAL SMART-ASS

I got back into the circuit after a five-year absence. The word around was that I was rusty and should have stayed in car sales, but that wasn't the case. Yes, I hadn't competed in five years, but I was by no means rusty. I had been training under Eddie Grundell for the last four and a half years, and I was in the best shape of my life. Eddie was a hot-dog seller in upper Manhattan, but was the U.S. amateur champ in '89. He had set himself up pretty well, and after he went pro the hot dog deal got pretty lucrative, so he was willing to travel with me to Colorado for my advanced training.

The smart-ass community was still reeling from Big Dave Redding's shrug off of Yuri Zelitchenko during the Mercedes Open in Berlin. It was the first time a match had been decided by a physical gesture since Walter Hastings sucker punched his opponent in 1882. That was before any protocol or rules had been set, though, so Walter won the match. It's rumored that Walter actually set up the punch with the correct context, so the punch was actually smart-ass, but nobody will ever know.

When I came back I was ranked 482<sup>nd</sup> in the world. I knew I was good, but I had to work my way in before I could be challenging the Edwards and the Nguyens and the Browns of the world. Charles Edwards, Byung Nguyen, and Russel Brown were the top-rated smart asses at the time, and Edwards was riding the crest of a fifteen-tournament run where he finished no lower than semi-finalist. Nguyen was a hot commodity, coming out of nowhere to place second in the German Open, and then winning the New York Smart-Ass Cup by sixteen and a half points. And Russel Brown, after twenty-three years playing major tournaments, was considering retiring. Everyone knew that he still had it, but he wasn't as fast on the floor as he was twenty years ago when no one could touch him. When he retires the smart-ass circuit is going to lose one of its finest stars and greatest ambassadors.

My first tournament back was the Toronto Cup. Eddie was back in New York, because we both knew I was ready. I've always had my own unique style on the court, and I didn't want our names to be mixed. The first round I was paired with some 18-year old just out of USC. The tournament was Western Standard, one of my stronger fields, where the higher-rated player places an object of his choosing on a table, and his opponent then gets to open.

I was wearing my usual white shirt, white shorts, and white smart-ass court shoes, because I didn't have any sponsors yet. I could tell the kid was nervous, so I brought out a phone and its holder with me, and placed it on the table. It was my first tournament in five years, but the kid was green and I was rusty so we had only about five hundred in the stands.

"Way to put it down," the kid opened, and I knew immediately that this would be a short match. The Jenkins Opening Retreat was a common tactic for green kids like this one, and I had been around long enough to know how to defeat it.

"Thanks! I did it just for you!" I countered.

"You do that often to try and make friends?"

"Speaking of friends, take this phone and call your friends. Both of them."

"I don't—er, you going to call Ezmeralda to hook up for that senior center square dance tonight?"

**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette  
Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.**

He stuttered, and I knew he was struggling. "Wait, I thought I was supposed to chaperone you and her at the dance? Isn't that what your mother called about?"

I knew I was pushing it too early with the mother comment, but then the judges called him on a foot fault and I knew he was reeling. I set him up with a Weston Inflection, he backpedaled into a corner, and I finished him off with a Kalusmeier Stab. The judges ruled 17-5 in my favor. I shook the kid's hand, shook the hands of the judges, and went back into the locker room so the trainer could put a cold wrap on my shoulder. I injured it eight years ago after going ninety minutes with Nicoli Stompinetti. It wasn't bothering me during my match with the USC kid, but I knew I should ice it just to be on the safe side.

I ended up placing third in Toronto, which was very respectable for my first showing in five years. I think I showed my time away in the last round, when I was knocked out with a, "That's the sort of thing Hitler would say." I didn't see it coming. So I spent the next three weeks driving a cab around Phoenix to stay sharp for the Barcelona Invitational, my first major meet. If I finish top five there, I'll qualify for the Australian Cup, the first major of the season.

There's nothing in the world that can compare to the moment when you step out onto the court for a Cup championship. The myriad rows of stands going all the way up to the cheap seats, the night sky spanning the top of the stadium like a blanket, the tens of thousands of faces, screaming, cheering, just as eager and just as anxious as the two on the court for the match to begin. There's an unseen throb of energy on nights like that, when you stand on the line and do your thing, be it kisses to the crowd or a wave or a tip of the cap. You've prepared for weeks for this, but for that one moment you're lost in the crowd. You are one of them, butterflies in the stomach and on your feet, brim full of anticipation. Suddenly you are a child again, skipping school to go to the stadium and watch your heroes, specks way down there on the court, but you know who they are and you know how they play and your chest is filled with that longing to someday be there, down on the court, the center of attention where you can bury your opponent and have an opening named after you. See your name on the scoreboard. You stand there, in your white shirt and smart-ass court shoes, gazing up at the stands, and you remember how it felt to be way up there, your hands at your neck, watching every move and counter move with an intensity so great that later that night you couldn't sleep because you were replaying that match over and over again in your head. That's where you learned the game, with the covers tucked in under your neck and the window open. That's where you made up your own moves, your own counters, you played it out in your mind and then took it to school where you awed your friends on the field with what you had dreamed up, and the cute girl kissed you on the cheek and you knew that this was the key, this was what you wanted to do for the rest of your life.

And now you're here, standing in the court. You *are* doing this, you are ready, and you lower your gaze to your opponent standing across from you. You know he is thinking the exact same thing you are, going through the exact same recollections, but that's unimportant now because now he's the enemy, he is all that stands in the way between you and that pretty girl, and you will tear him to shreds in front of tens of thousands of fans and you will show them who is the greatest and you will shake his hand afterward and blow kisses to the crowd because damn! you love the game.

**Subplot: Lizard breath**

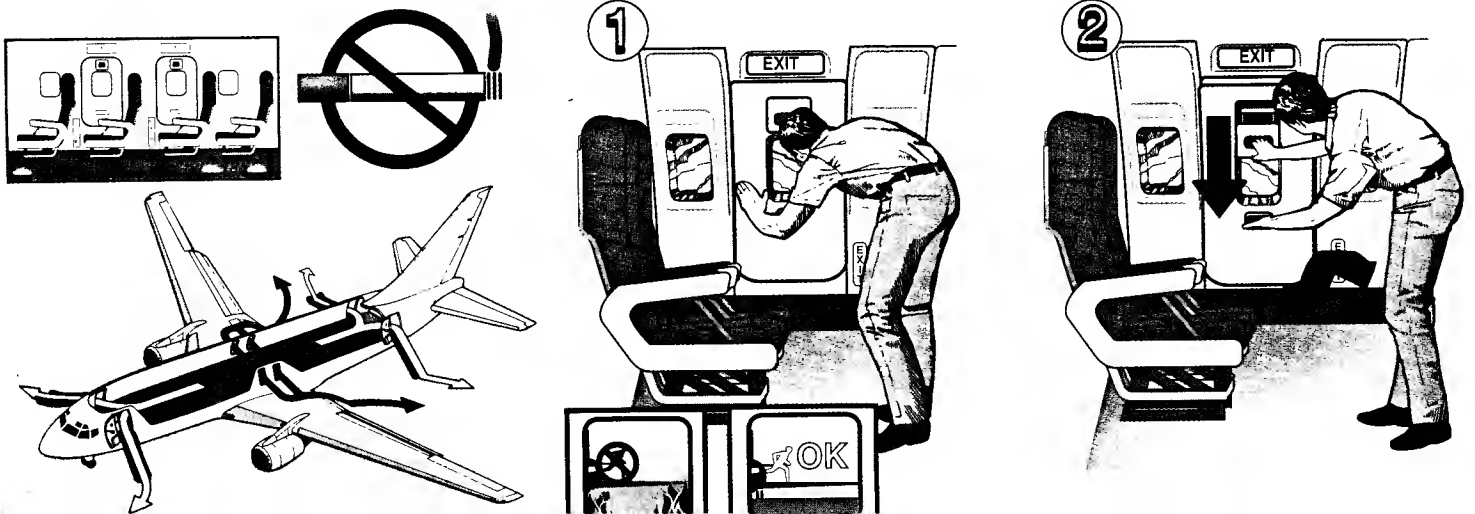
You ask me, what is worse than a life lived in fear? I say, a life lived in a car with an angry teenager, a screaming baby, a fed up mother, and a lost father. But, that's only my opinion, and as that angry teenager, everything I say should be taken with a grain of salt. Or so they tell me, because I still think I'm the most important being in the universe.

## The Pit

To the uninformed observer, the Pit is but a storage space for unwanted books where a man who has taught too many years lingers still. But I know better. For me, the forbiddingly named room is home, where the human embodiment of patience provides a refuge for intellectual misfits who need a place to be themselves without fear of condemnation.

The room itself is small, containing dust-lined bookshelves, a small couch, and an assortment of chairs and tables in the most nauseating shades of pea-soup green and muted goldenrod. The floor is covered by a thin carpet that was a dusky blue in the late 1970's; today it appears almost tie-dyed in shades of gray, black, and brown as a result of all the dirt and myriad stains accumulated over almost thirty years. As for the Pit's guardian, his deeply creased brow mirrors the carpet in many ways, for they have both suffered immeasurable abuse at the hands of students over the years— only he experiences it in the form of excuses, late assignments, and failed tests. How easy it is to dismiss this place as ill-maintained and outdated after a preliminary glance! But those of us who have passed innumerable hours in this sacred place recognize the beauty in the very abnormalities that detract from the room's aesthetic appeal according to more commonly-held standards.

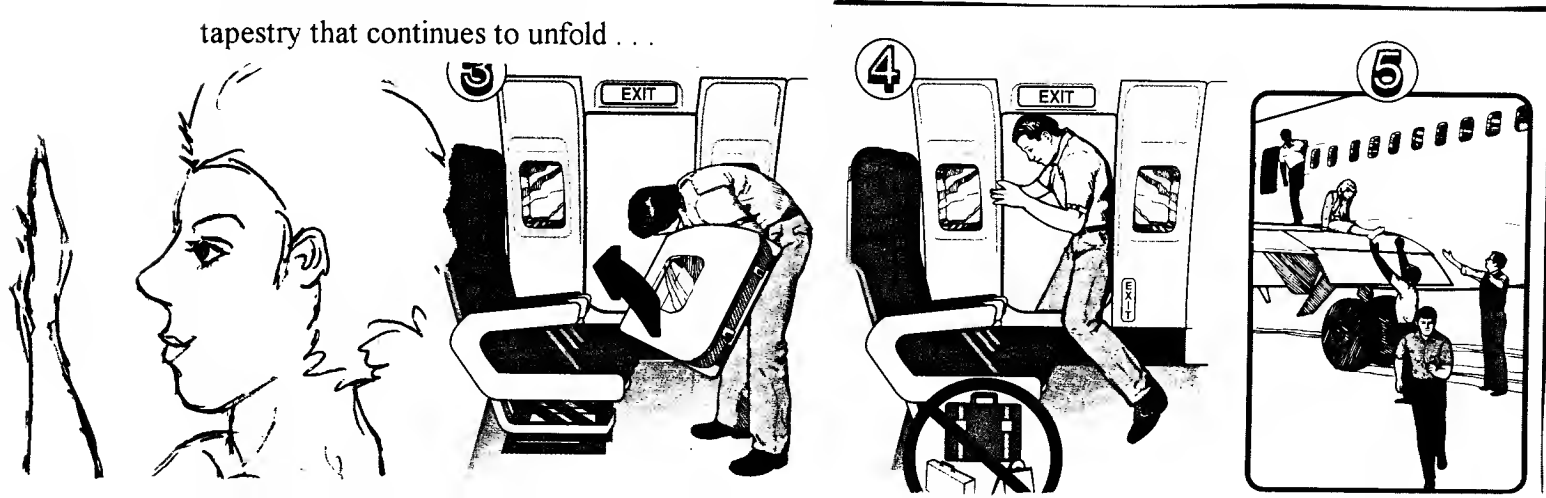
The chairs, tables, and couch have—quite literally—supported the generations of students who have come to pass their lunchtime in the Pit. The objects' legs are in various states of disrepair, their surfaces are deformed with scratches and scrawlings, but it would be uncalled for to look down on the furniture for its various irregularities: they are marks left by *life*. How many tearful students have those chairs held as a result of a traumatic test, excessive amount of stress, or tumultuous relationship? How many exhausted students have fallen asleep on the couch? And how many insightful essays have been written on the tables?



The story of the Pit is recorded far more obviously in the carpet, for its stains vividly recall aspects of the room's collective memory. Here, a brown blob from a Coke knocked from a table in a fit of laughter; there, a small amount of chocolate cake, baked with love, for the purpose of celebrating some momentous occasion inadvertently ground into the floor; and over there, mud tracked in from a field trip on a rainy day. The observer can only wonder who was there, and under what circumstances, to leave such unmistakable records of their presence. It is unlikely anything other than the carpet itself could say for sure, but the observer cannot help but recognize the implications of such marks, regardless of their origin: this is a place where many *lived* as they passed through the school.

If there is a being that comes closest to being able to tell the story of the Pit, it is none other than its guardian, the teacher who has opened his arms and doors to those who have cause to fear the perils of the swarming, raucous cafeteria. He has seen generations come and go, and can remember more than any student, for students see only their own chapter in the Pit's history, while he has participated in the chronicle from the beginning. His hair and beard are white and his skin is weathered by many years spent on baseball fields. At times, an excess of student noise causes his expression to contort into a scowl, and on occasion he yells at those juveniles who create the noise that crosses his threshold of tolerance, but only when it is well-deserved. But while his wrath is formidable, it quickly dissolves into a smile, as his eyes twinkle with joy and compassion towards all those gathered in his realm. He is the spirit of the Pit, and beautiful both through his own life, and through that of the Pit, which would have most likely remained little more than a makeshift storage room had it not been for him.

The beauty of the Pit is ultimately that which is beyond the furniture, the carpet, or even the guardian, though it is indisputably manifested in each of these. It is the tapestry of lives that met and interlocked here for a few years before being separated and scattered for the rest of eternity. I know that my epoch in this wonderful place is soon coming to a close, but it shall never be far from my heart, for I, too, am part of this tapestry that continues to unfold . . .



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